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Fact Sheet for the Chairman,
Subcommittee on Federal Services, Post
Office, and Civil Service, Committee on
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October 1989

POSTAL SERVICE

First-Class Air Travel by Top Postal Management





United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

General Government Division

B-237474

October 20, 1989

The Honorable David H. Pryor
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Federal Services, Post Office,
and Civil Service
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

During an interim briefing on your request regarding United States Postal Service (USPS) conferences, the Subcommittee requested that we expand our work to determine whether top management staff are using first-class transportation for official travel. This fact sheet responds to that request. USPS top management includes 35 officers at headquarters in Washington, D.C. and the 5 regional Postmasters General.

RESULTS IN BRIEF

According to the Assistant Postmaster General, Department of the Controller, 11 senior officers at headquarters¹ and the 5 Regional Postmasters General are authorized to use first-class air transportation. Other top management officers, most of whom are Assistant Postmasters General, must have the use of first-class air transportation approved by a senior officer.

Travel vouchers for an 8-week period ending July 28, 1989, show that USPS officers used first-class air travel accommodations for 126, or 36 percent, of 352 flights. Ten of the first-class flights were upgrades using earned frequent flyer mileage credits. The Postmaster General used first-class travel less frequently than most other senior officers.

APPROACH

Paid vouchers and supporting documentation are kept at the headquarters disbursing/travel office. We reviewed all the vouchers paid during accounting periods 10 and 11 (June 3 to July 28, 1989). These vouchers were the most recent ones paid at the time we did our work.

¹Postmaster General; Deputy Postmaster General; two Associate Postmasters General; five Senior Assistant Postmasters General; Chief Postal Inspector; and the General Counsel.

first-class air accommodations for 126 of 352 flights. Table 1.1 shows the frequency of first-class travel by officer title.

Table 1.1:
Travel by USPS Officers
Accounting Period 10 And 11
(June 3 to July 28, 1989)

<u>Title</u>	<u>Total Flights</u>	<u>First-Class Air Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Senior Officers			
Postmaster General	28	9	32
Deputy Postmaster General	17	13	76
Associate Postmasters General (2)	21	6	29
Senior Assistant Postmasters General (5)	41	26	63
Regional Postmasters General (5)	64	29	45
Chief Postal Inspector	6	2	33
Other Officers			
Assistant Postmasters General	166	39	23
Executive Assistant to the Postmaster General	<u>9</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>22</u>
Total	352	126	36

As shown in table 1.1, 36 percent of 352 flights were first-class accommodations. Ten of the 126 first-class flights were upgrades by two Assistant Postmasters General using frequent flyer mileage credits. Eighteen of the first-class flights were made on international travel.

The Postmaster General used first-class flights less frequently than most other senior management staff. According to a staff member in the disbursing/travel office, the Postmaster General follows a policy of using first-class travel only when flights are over 2 hours long.

The Assistant Postmaster General, Department of the Controller, reviewed a draft of this fact sheet and suggested clarifications that have been incorporated where appropriate. He noted that written guidance on policy for first-class travel has been prepared in draft and is expected to be issued soon.

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As arranged with the Subcommittee, unless you publicly announce the contents of this fact sheet earlier, we plan no further distribution until 30 days from the date of this letter. At that time, we will send copies to the Postmaster General, the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, and other interested parties. We will also make copies available to others upon request.

If you have any questions, please call me on 275-8676, or Assistant Director Willis Elmore on 268-4950. He and senior evaluator Alton Turman were major contributors to this fact sheet.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L. Nye Stevens". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "L" and a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

L. Nye Stevens
Director, Government Business
Operations Issues

(225086)

Our primary objective was to determine the class of air transportation used by USPS officers. We did not check the accuracy of the vouchers or determine if the use of first-class air transportation was properly authorized. The Postal Inspection Service audits the vouchers annually.

BACKGROUND

Rules for travel by USPS officers are disseminated by memoranda from the Senior Assistant Postmaster General, Finance Group. The latest update--May 20, 1988--says:

"As specified by the Board of Governors, it is the U.S. Postal Service's policy to reimburse officers for actual expenses incurred during official travel and for specified representation expenses."

The use of first-class transportation is not mentioned in the May 20, 1988, memorandum, and no other written guidance currently exists on the use of first-class travel by officers. According to the Assistant Postmaster General, Department of the Controller, the policy on use of first-class transportation is

- First-class travel is authorized for senior officers and Regional Postmasters General.
- First-class travel by Assistant Postmasters General and other officers must be approved by a senior officer.

Rules have been written to cover the use of frequent flyer mileage credits. The rules are as follows:

- Frequent flyer mileage credits can be used to upgrade tickets to first-class.
- Mileage credits can be used to pay for official travel.
- Mileage earned is not required to be reported, but it is not to be used for personal travel.

TRAVEL BY USPS OFFICERS

During a recent 8-week period (accounting periods 10 and 11) USPS officers filed travel vouchers showing that they used

